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ABSTRACT

Based on Larry Hutchins' analysis of the school effectiveness literature, the Profile of School Excellence (PRO-S/E) is a diagnostic tool keyed to 11 instructional and organizational variables which are positively related to effective/excellent schools and which are alterable. The variables are: needs basis; objectives; expectations; roles and responsibilities; conditions and resources; instructional time and task orientation; assessment use; rewards and reinforcement; behavior code; school climate; and parental support and involvement. Seven data gathering procedures are used: district data forms; school data forms; school rating forms for district central office staff; superintendent interviews; principal interviews; student questionnaires; and teacher questionnaires. Each procedure was pilot tested and revised in school settings. The completed PRO-S/E has been administered in eight local education agencies (LEA's), ranging in size from 777 to 17,850 students and from 2 to 47 schools, in five states. The PRO-S/E provides superintendents with diagnostic information through a series of graphs (profiles) and a rating report with suggestions for further research and development methods for identified problem areas. It is especially useful for superintendents of smaller school districts with no management information system. Using PRO-S/E, the Appalachia Educational Laboratory has enhanced the linkage between the research and development community and the practitioner community. (BS)

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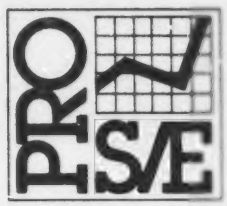

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SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS: PROFILE OF SCHOOL EXCELLENCE*

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Background and Introduction

The "school excellence" theme has attracted considerable national attention. The report of the National Commission on Eduational Excellence was the first of many major reports which have called attention to the theme. Professional journals have used the excellence theme. Professional associations have organized their annual meetings around the theme. The U.S. Secretary of Education is sponsoring programs to reward "excellent" schools. Most state education agencies have organized efforts to address the theme. However, it was AEL's observation that the Commission's activity, the journal articles, and the convention presentations provided local school leaders few concrete ideas about how to improve school effectiveness. Further, AEL suspected that the media's coverage of the Commission's report would increase for local superintendents the number of inquiries about excellence from board members and parents. It was the latter concern, reinforced by comments from many of the local educational agency (LEA) superintendents in AEL's Region, that led to the decision to develop the Profile of School Excellence (PRO-S/E)[1].

Theoretical Framework

The PRO-S/E is a diagnostic tool keyed to 11 instructional and organizational variables research has shown to be positively related to effective schools and which are alterable. The purposes of this presentation are to

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[1] As one of the regional educational laboratories sponsored principally by the National Institute of Education, AEL serves educators in the states of Alabama, Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. However, development of the PRO-S/E was supported only by corporate funds.

describe the procedural methodology associated with the project, delineate the analytical techniques utilized, and present relevant outcomes.

The PRO-S/E is based on an analysis of the school effectiveness literature adapted from Hutchins (1982). That analysis, Figure 1, identifies 11 characteristics positively correlated with effective schools. The authors use the terms effective and excellent synonymously. That is, the authors assume that an effective school is an excellent school. For this paper, then, an effective/excellent school is one where (1) basic skills achievement cannot be predicted from students' socioeconomic status, (2) student attendance is regularly above 90%, (3) documented occurrences of vandalism and delinquency are relatively low, and (4) high satisfaction ratings are given the school by all stakeholders. The authors have synthesized this definition from the literature on effective schools, particularly Edmonds, 1980; Rutter, 1979; and Goodlad, 1982.

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Instructional Process Variables

	Students	Teachers	Principals	Superintendents/ Central Office Staff
1.	Experiences a clearly identified need;	Accurately diagnose needs; Champagne, et al, n.d.	Develop or select and implement diagnostic, needs sensing systems; Edmonds 1980	Assess needs for improvement; Smirk, 1981
2.	Focuses on a relevant, attainable objective;	Prescribe and communicate nature of academic learning tasks;	Define & communicate community-relevant goals & instructional objectives (especially in math & reading). Rutter 1979, Brookover and Lezotte 1979, Edmonds 1979, CA 1980	Plan specific activities that will lead to improvement; reject programs that are ineffective; Glaser and Ross 1971, Herriott and Gross 1979, Rutter 1979
3.	Expects to succeed;	Communicate the belief that each student can and will succeed; Armor et al 1976, Brookover and Lezotte 1979, Rutter 1979, Edmonds 1979, Glenn 1981, California 1980	Demonstrate a high level of expectation for acadmic accomplishment; Webber 1979, Trisman 1976, Venezky and Winfield 1979	Set high expectations for changes that will further improve practice; Brookover and Lezotte 1979, Austin 1978
4.	Assumes an appropriate level of responsibility for learning, cooperates with others, and participates in a broad range of academic and non-academic activities;	Prepare students to assume responsibility for learning; Rutter 1979	Encourage (and receive) responsible autonomy at the classroom and building level; Armor 1976, Hargrove et al 1981, Levine and Stark 1981	Maintain sufficient, flexible, complex, known organization model; Establish coordinated but independent improvement efforts at all levels in the system. Salganic 1980, Brookover & Lezotte '79, Austin '78
5.	Receives appropriate academic and skill experiences in an interactive, participatory mode until he/she is successful;	Group students appropriately; present and model information and skills in an interactive way to motivate all students; NY 1974, Rutter 1979, Rosenshine & Stevens 1981, Stallings 1980	Obtain and provide all necessary materials and technical resources; Levine and Stark 1981, NIE 1978	Provide inservice training, personal development opportunities, and necessary information; California 1980, Armor 1976
6.	Attends to and engages in academic tasks;	Proves adequate time for discovery, practice, and transfer of learning; Fisher et al 1980, Evertson 1980	Establish and uniformly enforce attendance policies and time assigned to academic tasks; Harnischfeger and Wiley 1978, NIE 1978	Create time for communication, learning, training, etc.; Little 1981
7.	Has knowledge of outcomes (success);	Monitors and evaluates progress and reports (feedback) results; Webber 1971, Rutter 1979, Rosenshine 1980, Fisher et al 1980	Design and operates an evaluation system that reports a continuous flow of nationally-normed, locally relevant, criterion-referenced information. Edmonds 1979, Webber 1979, Levine and Stark 1981	Monitor, evaluate, and report progress; Fullan 1980
8.	Experiences a sense of accomplishment and achievement;	Rewards and/or praises appropriately all those deserving; Rutter 1979	Organize and carry out procedures for recognizing accomplishment and achievement by students and all staff; NIE 1978, Bredo 1977, Peterson 1980	Acknowledge and reward efforts at improvement, reduce risk of failure; Little 1981
9.	Has access to, accepts, and cooperates in creating a predictable, pleasant, safe, clean environment;	Establishes and fairly enforces rules, structure, routines, and consequences; Rosenshine and Stevens 1981, Edmonds 1979, Rutter 1979, Stallings 1981, Evertson 1980	Collaboratively and fairly enforce standard operating procedure (rules, codes, etc.) that minimize burdensome tasks and provide a predictable, pleasant, safe, clean environment; Webber 1971, NIE 1978, Rutter 1979, Levine and Stark 1981	Establish routines and strategies for improvement (e.g., research); Little 1981, Hall 1979, 1980
10.	Receives from and returns to those around him/her a sense of caring, personal concern, interest, respect, commitment and support for persons, property, and ideas;	Receives from & returns to those around a sense of caring, personal concern, interest, respect, commitment & support for persons, property, and ideas; Good & Grouws 1979, Webber 1971, Rutter 1979	Create and model a collegial environment in which individuals and ideas are respected and supported; Webber 1971, Rutter 1979, NIE 1978	Plan collaborative activities that are sensitive to concerns and differences in group situations; Little 1981, Hall 1979, 1980, Hershey and Blanchard 1977
11.	Receives and accepts parental and community interest, involvement, help, and approval for academic learning.	Actively encourages and solicits parental interest, participation, and support for learning. Armor et al 1976	Establish procedures that encourage meaningful parental and community interest involvement and support. Brookover and Lezotte 1979	Involve parents, community members, students, and staff appropriately in improvement planning, activities, and evaluation; CA 1980, Berman & McLaughlin 1975, 1977, 1978, Little 1981, Glenn 1981

Adapted from Larry Hutchins, et al., 1982.

Figure 1

Definitions for the 11 variables used in the PRO-S/E follow:

1. NEEDS BASIS: The degree to which school personnel use an in-place system for identifying, teaching, evaluating, and remediating students' learning needs.

2. OBJECTIVES: The degree to which school personnel prescribe and communicate to students relevant and attainable objectives for each academic course.

3. EXPECTATIONS: The degree to which school personnel communicate clearly to each student, the belief (the expectation) that each can and will succeed in attaining prescribed academic objectives.

4. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES: The degree to which school personnel prepare each student to assume an appropriate level of responsibility for learning, to recognize and cooperate with others playing key roles in the school system, and to participate in a broad range of academic and non-academic activities.

5. CONDITIONS & RESOURCES: The degree to which school personnel provide students exemplary conditions of learning, that is, they group students appropriately; they present and model information and skills in an interactive way that properly motivates students; and they use excellent instructional materials to assure maximum student participation and success.

6. INSTRUCTIONAL TIME & TASK ORIENTATION: The degree to which school personnel provide students maximum <u>instructional</u> time during class periods and assure the students attend to and engage in <u>academic</u> tasks during class time.

7. USE OF ASSESSMENT: The degree to which school personnel use assessment data as the basis for informing students of their academic progress and informing teachers of their students' remediation needs.

8. REWARDS & REINFORCEMENT: The degree to which school personnel use an in-place system of reinforcement that recognizes the accomplishments and achievements of students and staff.

9. CODE OF BEHAVIOR: The degree to which school personnel communicate clearly and enforce equitably rules, structure, routines, and consequences governing student behavior.

10. SCHOOL CLIMATE: The degree to which school personnel create and model a collegial environment in which students receive and return to those around them a sense of caring, personal concern, interest, respect, commitment, and support for persons, property, and ideas.

11. PARENTAL SUPPORT & INVOLVEMENT: The degree to which school personnel have established procedures that encourage meaningful parental and community interest, involvement, and support in students' academic learning.

Development Process

To assess the strength of the 11 characteristics (variables), the PRO-S/E utilizes 7 data gathering procedures: district data form, school data form, school rating form for district central office staff, superintendent interview, principal interview, student questionnaire and teacher questionnaire.

Each procedure was pilot tested in school settings. The data forms, rating forms and interviews were revised until trial use indicated they were in satisfactory form. Special attention was given to the two questionnaires. Each questionnaire included at least 5 items to measure each of the 11 variables. Utilizing the Dale-Chall and Frye techniques, the reading levels of the questionnaires were determined to be appropriate for the intended audience: 6th-grade for students and 13th-grade for teachers. These questionnaires were used to assess the perceptions of students and teachers from six high schools in the pilot test site. The perceptions of students and of teachers were compared with the perceptions of appropriate central office staff to assess the discrimination power of the questionnaires. District central office staff members' ratings were provided on the school rating form. The form consisted of the 11 definitions and a ten-point rating scale. A coefficient of concordance (ω) was computed for each school across six raters. For each school the (ω) $> .90$ and was statistically significant ($p < .01$). The district central office staff's ratings of the schools and the teachers' and students' questionnaire ratings of the school were significantly correlated ($p < .05$). Thus, the questionnaires were judged to be satisfactory measures of subjects' perceptions of the strength of the 11 PRO-S/E variables. Since the PRO-S/E was intended only to gather perceptual data for diagnostic use, no other developmental testing of the procedures was conducted.

Implementation Process

The completed PRO-S/E has now been administered in eight LEA's across five states. The LEA's range in size from 777 to 17,850 students and from 2 to 47 schools. At these sites AEL used seven PRO-S/E data sources:

1. Members of the district central office staff provided ratings of the schools to be studied on the 11 characteristics.
2. A 50 percent sample of the district's non-itinerant teachers responded to the PRO-S/E Teacher Questionnaire.
3. A 10 percent sample of the district's 6th-12th grade students responded to the PRO-S/E Student Questionnaire.
4. The principals completed a PRO-S/E Data Form that provided general information about their respective schools.
5. The superintendent completed a PRO-S/E Data Form that provided general information about the school system.
6. Each principal was interviewed by one of the researchers who used a PRO-S/E Principal Interview Form.
7. The superintendent was interviewed by the team of researchers who used a PRO-S/E Superintendent Interview Form.

Ratings of the schools by the central office staff (#1) and questionnaire responses by teachers (#2) and by students (#3) were weighted and then plotted on PRO-S/E Profile Charts. The district and school data forms (#4 and #5) and the interviews with the principals and the superintendent (#6 and #7) were used in the interpretation and discussion of the profiles.

Results

The PRO-S/E provides superintendents with diagnostic information. It provides a series of graphs (profiles) and a brief, understandable narrative report which show and tell how a school system rates on factors research has shown to be associated with effective schools. The graphs, see Figure 2, show visually whether a school is perceived as "superior" (above 90%), "acceptable" (between 90% and 70%), "marginal" (between 70% and 50%), or "unacceptable" (below 50%) on these factors. These rating categories, established by the authors as a result of the pilot test, have worked well in subsequent implementations. The report contains also a comparison of the district's PRO-S/E data with the literature's four-part definition of an effective school. Finally, the report suggests R & D-based methods for developing empirical data to further assess variables perceived to be problematic.

PRO-S/E reports are from 40 to 100-plus pages depending on the size of the client-district and the number of schools the client elects to include in the study. The report begins with one to three pages defining the purpose and limitations of the diagnostic study and the procedures followed. Next, school-by-school findings are presented alphabetically. The profile graph for each school is followed by 2-3 pages of narrative. Finally a 10-15 page confidential memorandum to the superintendent discusses perceptions across the schools and suggests alternative, R & D-based courses of action for dealing with problem areas.

The PRO-S/E increases the data base superintendents have to use in making decisions about what to do next to improve the effectiveness of their respective LEAs. It is, therefore, highly valued by those superintendents who have used it. AEL recognizes and advertises the limitations of the PRO-S/E--it is

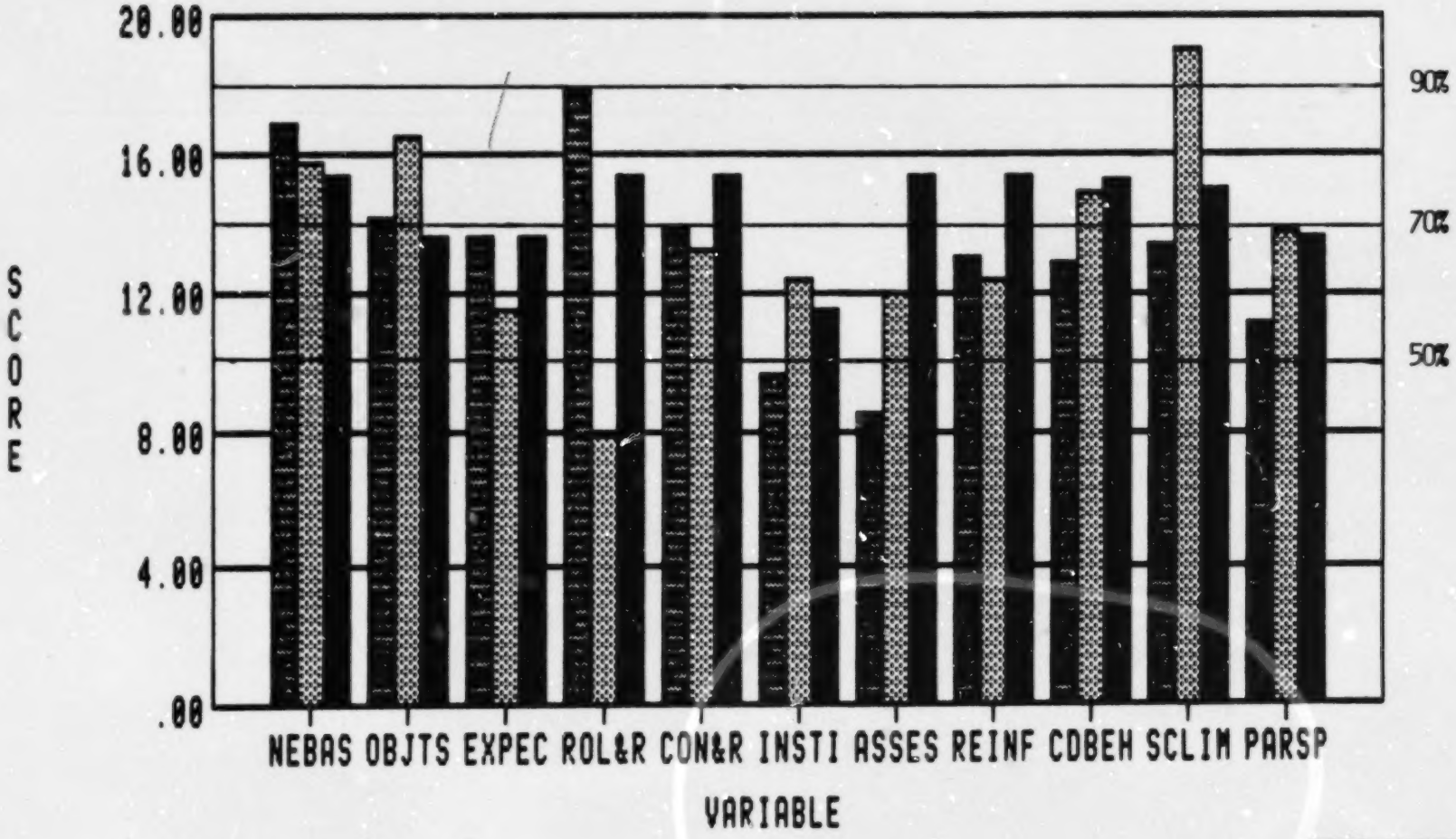

Figure 2

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PROFILE Profile of School Excellence

diagnostic, perception-based, and is based on limited input from some LEA stakeholders. However, the process is relatively low-cost, non-obstrusive and quick--final report back to the district within six weeks of the researchers' site visit. It seems, therefore, to have considerable utility to superintendents of smaller school districts who have no management information system in place and who want a rational basis for proposing particular school excellence initiatives to their respective school boards or for deciding how to deal with competing school improvement priorities.

Growth in R & D-based school improvement activities during the last 5-10 years has been noteworthy. Using the effective schools research as a framework for school improvement activities is a good example of how research can contribute to educational practice. AEL is designed to optimize the linkage between the R & D community and the practitioner community. Through the use of the PRO-S/E, AEL has enhanced this linkage; through linkages with other technical assistance providers, regional educational laboratories, and R & D centers, AEL can identify also research-based processes and products that districts can use to address areas diagnosed as needing further attention.